



News Release

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Fire Marshal Warns of Risks of Open Burning

Open Burning Banned in Municipalities with Populations of 7,500 or More Since 1995

May 2, 2005 – The Michigan Office of the State Fire Marshal issued a warning today about the potential fire hazard associated with open burning. Open burning has been prohibited since 1995 in any municipality having a population of 7,500 or more, unless specifically authorized by local ordinance.

Open burning is the burning of unwanted materials such as paper, trees, brush, leaves, grass, and other debris, where smoke and other emissions are released directly into the air without passing through a chimney or stack. Open burning pollutes the air and poses a fire hazard. The air pollution created by open burning can irritate eyes and lungs, obscure visibility, soil nearby surfaces, create annoying odors, and is a danger to those with respiratory conditions.

"With recent snow melt, the idea of dry conditions seems bizarre," said Andy Neumann, State Fire Marshal. "However, with the typical spring winds drying out fields and grass, the potential for fire is escalated. Human error causes over 90% of Michigan's wildfires, making prevention everyone's responsibility."

It is a misdemeanor to burn without a permit. Any person that violates the law and causes a forest or grass fire can be held liable for all costs and damages associated with the suppression and control of that fire.

The Office of State Fire Marshal recommends using extreme safety precautions for any outdoor burning. Evening is the safest time to burn debris, after winds have died down. Keep fires small, and never leave a fire unattended, even for a moment. In fact, state law requires that a debris fire be attended at all times. Always be certain the fire is completely extinguished before leaving it.

Composting yard waste and using leaves and grass clippings for mulch are alternatives to open burning of yard waste. For more information on composting, contact the local Michigan State University Extension Office. Also, consider recycling plastics, cardboard, paper and metals at the local waste/recycling center or donate reusable items to charitable organizations, families, or friends instead of burning.

Information on where to obtain a burn permit, the latest fire statistics and wildfire safety can be obtained from the DNR Website at: www.michigan.gov/dnr.

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